

FIVE PROVEN STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN TO OBTAIN BOARD SEATS

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The importance of women serving on corporate boards has been a hot topic in the news lately. Germany is the most recent country to set a quota for the number of women required on company boards at 30% by January 2016, joining at least 15 other countries including France, Norway and Italy. Reports show that companies do better financially and managerially when their boards are gender-diverse. Despite the buzz, something continues to keep women from getting appointed board seats, and it isn't just men setting barriers.



Women need to be active in the pursuit of board seats and become better self-promoters. Below are five proven strategies for women to enhance their visibility with a biography that demonstrates board readiness.

Understand Your Value

Boards don't always consist of just CEOs or company presidents. They are often looking to round out their membership with someone possessing a specific professional skill. Having marketing know-how, risk-management financial expertise, IT skills, or another areas of specialty can make a big difference. Demonstrate that you are the expert in your field by publishing an article or becoming active in your industry association. Be able to articulate that value and you will get noticed.

Build Your Brand

Ensure that your board bio effectively communicates the skills and value discussed above. In fact, your entire board portfolio (cover letter, biography, board profile) should add to your credibility and be consistent in messaging and keywords. LinkedIn is a valuable resource for board recruiters and will be reviewed in a social media audit. Be sure to position your LinkedIn profile for candidacy and connect with associations or search firms that fill board positions.

Increase Your Visibility

Strategic networking both *inside* and *outside* of your company can enhance your visibility for board seats. Increase your network and your profile by attending or speaking at professional conferences, writing and publishing articles, and getting involved in board work for non-profit, academic or professional associations.

Be Engaged

It's important for board candidates to be leaders in their organization and to have a positive, well-known reputation. Leading projects and initiatives gets you to the front of the room and top-of-mind for executives with board-pull.

Communicate and Cultivate

Make your skills and interests known. Tell your network and employer that you are interested in serving on a board, and ask your CEO to support your board aspirations. Seek mentors with board connections and network with individuals currently serving on boards. The more people you have in your corner the better.

[Molly D. Shepard](#) is President and CEO of [The Leader's Edge/Leaders By Design](#), a company dedicated to the advancement of executive and high-potential women. The firm is in the 9th year of hosting the [Women On Board](#)[™] program, a two-day seminar in Philadelphia that helps prepare women leaders for obtaining board seats.